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14 MAY 2008

GP2 SERIES Spain / Turkey

Lift off

A new car, a new season
and a rookie winner in the
Barcelona season-opener



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STREETWISE
LOOKING AHEAD TO MONACO

HOT ROOKIE
ALVARO PARENTE Q & A

ALL THE GLITZ
GP2 SERIES LAUNCH PARTY

Better and better

A battery of new faces and a new, faster car – expectations for a thrilling GP2 Series season are high, and the opening rounds in Spain and Turkey delivered to perfection

We're just two rounds into the 2008 season, and the GP2 Series has already produced faster lap times, rookie winners and a boot full of thrilling on-track action. Four different drivers – including GP2 Series new boys Alvaro Parente, Kamui Kobayashi and Romain Grosjean – emerged from the Spanish and Turkish races with victories under their belt. As the circus travels to Monaco for its next stop the top three are separated by only 10 points. It's all shaping up rather nicely...

Fast and new

"If it ain't broke, don't fix it" was the adage that GP2 organisers diligently ignored when they decided to introduce a new car for the 2008 season, and their decision to fly in the face of proverbs has been vindicated by some super-quick lap times. During Saturday's Turkish feature race, the fastest lap times

were 2.1 seconds quicker than those set last year thanks to a combination of the new GP2/08 car and cooler weather conditions. The reliability of the Dallara-built and Renault V8 powered machine also proved as rock solid in the races as it did during the thousands of laps of pre-season testing.

Fast and new too

As lap times edge ever closer to Formula 1, this year's GP2 Series is proving to be as unpredictable as it is quick. Of the early-season race winners – Super Nova Racing's Alvaro Parente, Dams' Kamui Kobayashi, Racing Engineering's Giorgio Pantano, and ART Grand Prix's Romain Grosjean – all but Pantano are in their first full GP2 Series season, while Parente and Kobayashi both landed wins in their first GP2 Series outing. In fact, you have to say expectations have been met. We're in for a thriller.

4

different winners from the first four races of 2008



For all the latest news log on to:
WWW.GP2SERIES.COM

GP2 SERIES – A FLYING START IN BARCELONA

As the lights go green on the 2008 GP2 Series, the great and the good of the paddock give us their views on new cars, fresh faces and keeping pace with Formula 1 teams



Bruno Michel,
GP2 Series organiser

We had two great races, especially because it is difficult to overtake in Barcelona. It is not an easy circuit, but just look at all the battles and overtaking we had throughout the field. Also, we had almost zero technical problems, the only issue reported from all 26 cars was a broken spark plug for Ben Hanley. That's great for a new car. The fact that the top eight in both races were all from different teams shows how strong the field is. It was also interesting to see that out of the top eight finishers, only Andreas Zuber and Giorgio Pantano did not compete in GP2 Asia - which proves the high standard of drivers in that series.



David Sears
Super Nova team manager

I think there could be eight to 10 different race winners this year. There's still a lot more development to come out of the new GP2/08 car, and, as the teams do more and more work away from the track, the cars are just going to get quicker and quicker.



Frederic Vasseur
ART Grand Prix team manager

I think we'll be posting similar times to a few of the back-of-field F1 teams at Monaco this year, as it is their first year without traction control and our cars have so much torque. It would be really great if GP2 could be as quick as them. In fact, I expect that we'll come close in qualifying and the race



Romain Grosjean
ART Grand Prix driver,
and GP2 Asia champion

It's definitely more difficult to drive than the old car. There is a lot more rear tyre degradation because we have much more power. Plus, the car is very sensitive and nervous. But then again, in race configuration, it's nice because, as you saw, once the tyres are worn, the cars are moving all over the place and that helps when trying to overtake.



Mike Conway
Trident Racing driver

It's still a difficult car to drive. There's a lot of engine braking - every time you come off the throttle it really kills the power and that can flip the rear end out. Also, you've really got to maintain the tyres, but that's the challenge, and it's all part of racing.

Q&A

ALVARO PARENTE

In this year's GP2 Series season-opener in Barcelona, Super Nova driver Alvaro Parente became the first rookie winner since Heikki Kovalainen won the very first GP2 race back in 2005. He talks to us about his astounding weekend.

Your first race weekend in the GP2 Series, how did it feel?

I felt comfortable with the car straight away on Friday morning in free practise. We had had some issues with the rear of the car in pre-season testing, but it was

clear immediately that we had made big improvements, so I was confident and able to attack the circuit.

Were you disappointed not to get pole?

I knew that as long as I got a good, clean run, and didn't have problems with other cars, I could put it at the sharp end of the grid. That is what happened. Shame about the third sector. I had slight oversteer - that maybe cost me pole. But, to be second and on the front row was great.

Were you nervous before the start?

No, not really. It felt like any other other start. I just needed to get focused and ready to go.

You seemed remarkably calm all the way through the weekend?

When the car is doing what you want it to do, and you are getting out of it the maximum that it can do, then it is easy to remain calm and confident. But, remaining calm is the normal way for me; it helps everyone else in the team. It is equally important to get the most out of those people working with you.

GOOD MONTH



GIORGIO PANTANO

A brace of fourth places, a podium and an Istanbul feature race win. The veteran Racing Engineering driver leads the championship by five points.



ROMAIN GROSJEAN SEBASTIEN BUEMI

The ART Grand Prix driver and his Trust Team Arden rival have shown consistent pace, and currently line up second and third in the championship respectively. Buemi has clawed his way from the back of the field to snatch podiums, whilst Grosjean's Istanbul performance - a second in Saturday's feature race and a win on Sunday - make amends for Barcelona's disappointments.



ALVARO PARENTE

After his amazing debut in Barcelona, the Super Nova driver struggled in Istanbul. A spin in qualifying and retirement in race one meant a back of grid start for race two. The Portuguese driver left Turkey pointless and drops to seventh in the championship.



PIQUET SPORTS

There is no doubt that this team has been consistently quick. However, their impressive qualifying runs are yet to translate into race results, leaving Pastor Maldonado pondering a glut of racing incidents.



LUCA FILIPPI

The talented ART Grand Prix driver has struggled so far, leaving those in the know wondering when the real Luca will turn up.

BAD MONTH



2008 GP2 Series launches in style

The 2008 GP2 Series got started in grand fashion with a sparkling prize-giving for the GP2 Asia championship and launch ceremony for the GP2 Series at the Teatre Auditori de Granollers, just outside Barcelona.

Joining the GP2 drivers and team bosses at the event were Formula 1 stars (and former GP2 graduates) Lewis Hamilton, Heikki Kovalainen, and Nelson Piquet as well as Red Bull's Mark Webber and Renault F1 test driver and 2007 GP2 Series runner up Lucas Di Grassi.

All the F1 drivers admitted to being huge fans of GP2 and laughed at their increasingly creative methods for delaying their post-qualifying debriefs to watch the races. "I love this world," said Lewis Hamilton. Then, pointing to ART Grand Prix's Frédéric Vasseur, he continued. "It's thanks to them that I won the title and, as a result, stand here before you today wearing McLaren team colours."

Webber was equally effusive. "There's no doubt GP2 has proven credentials for grooming F1 stars," he said. "Personally, as a racer, I love seeing the new guys fighting it out and making those classic mistakes that we all have to go through in order to understand where the limit is."

Highlights of the evening were the GP2 Asia title winner Romain Grosjean receiving his championship trophy from Hamilton and a US\$50,000 cheque from Bridgestone, and the spectacular unveiling of the new GP2/08 car, complete with all the drivers in their team overalls. A fitting start for the 2008 GP Series action to get started the next day.



2008 GP2 SERIES™
ISTANBUL 9-11 MAY



REPORTING FOR DUTY

The nine finalists taking part in this year's Bridgestone e-reporter contest attended the GP2 Series launch ahead of the Spanish Grand Prix.

The contest for aspiring journalists – open to European students aged 18 to 30 – celebrates its fifth year in 2008 and is more popular than ever. There were 50 per cent more applicants than in 2007, with entrants from a diverse list of countries.

The 2008 finalists are Gavin Grace from Ireland, Lorenzo Quolantoni from Switzerland, Tabatha Valls Halling from Spain, Olivier Cougard and Guillaume Navarro from France, Alan Ng from Germany, Rutger Wuyts from Belgium and James Aitchison and Tom Drew from the UK.

They'll attend GP2 Series events to report on the championship, with Gavin Grace staying on to report in Spain. Articles from all of the entrants will appear on the GP2 website, www.gp2series.com.

The eventual winner will attend a Bridgestone event as part of a prize designed to further their writing career.

For more information, go to www.bridgestone.eu



TRIDENT DISCOURAGES QUICK DRIVING

Trident Racing has put together an innovative scheme – "Fast on track; Not on road" – to use its GP2 Series racing programme to discourage young drivers from using excessive speed on public roads.



In Italy alone there were 238,000 accidents and 5700 fatalities last year, 30 percent of which involved drivers aged between 16 and 29.

Trident Racing drivers Mike Conway and Ho-Pin Tung are both fully behind the scheme. "A lot of young people love the feeling of speed," Conway acknowledged. "But it must not be on the road. It has to be in a controlled environment, on a track."

The 'Fast on track' scheme – put together in conjunction with Bayer and Momo – will distribute 250,000 postcards in Italian restaurants, nightclubs and cinemas, with more initiatives to come at the Monza round of the GP2 Series in September.



FROM THE GP2SERIES.COM BLOG

"Parente was ecstatic, the first debutant in the series to win his first race since Heikki Kovalainen in the first ever GP2 race back in 2005. The Super Nova garage was swarming with well-wishers, including countryman Deco and his FC Barcelona teammate Eidur Gudjohnsen, who were delighted to see their friend do so well at their local circuit."

See blog.gp2series.caradisiac.com for more

PASTOR MALDONADO GETTING IT RIGHT IN MONACO



The Monaco Grand Prix is the jewel in the crown of Formula 1, which makes winning the supporting GP2 Series event in front of the F1 teams even more important for GP2's budding stars. Piquet Sports' Pastor Maldonado knows what it's like to do that, having secured victory in last year's event. He gives us his top tips for success on the Principality's streets.



GET THE RIGHT SETUP

"Remember, this is a street circuit and so the track surface has very little grip. You slide a lot and it's very bumpy. For these reasons, the setup we use for the car in Monaco is a one-off. We'll set the car very high off the ground, with very soft dampers, and using maximum aerodynamics on the wings."

STAY CEREBRAL

"Two years ago I won in Monaco in the World Series by Renault, and last year I won in GP2. Many people want to win here and ask the question how you do it. For me, the difference is mental focus – the two previous times I went to Monaco knowing I'd win; I honestly believe that is what makes the difference."

DARE TO DREAM

"To win in Monaco is fantastic. It's the most important race in the whole season and the most difficult circuit of the year. You cannot make any mistakes – not even the slightest. The track is so narrow, and reaction times are so short. Ever since I was young, winning at Monaco was my dream and I knew one day that I would do it."



KNOW YOUR LIMIT

"To find the limit here is really, really tough. You have to take more risks than anywhere else that we drive and, in order to be fastest, you have to take more risks than anyone else. But, you have to appreciate that there is a limit to all risk. I spend a lot of time the week before the race preparing the exact position I want to have my car, point-by-point around the circuit, making sure that, if I follow this exact route, the car will not move too much."

ABSOLUTELY, DEFINITELY, SECURE POLE POSITION

"It's incredibly difficult to overtake at Monaco so, for sure, the most important thing is qualifying; if you are on pole position and at the front of the field, you have 80 per cent of the race in your pocket."

AWAY FROM THE TRACK

KAMUI KOBAYASHI, AIMING FOR A ROYAL FLUSH

DAMS driver Kamui Kobayashi admits to being a bit of an ace with a pack of cards when he's not racing.

"When we have a break I get a few friends together and we play poker," says the Japanese ace, who is also the Panasonic Toyota F1 Team test driver. "Likewise, when I'm on the road I play against Timo Glock. It's a lot of fun."

His best hand, ever? "I've had plenty of four-of-a-kind, but my dream is to get a Royal Flush – ace, king, queen, jack, 10 all in the same suit. That would be cool."

For those interested in

watching poker at its most intense, Kamui recommends the last James Bond movie, *Casino Royale*. "When the bad guy has that full house of aces and sixes – which he thinks is unbeatable – then Bond reveals his straight flush and wins a cool US\$120 million! That's great!"

Asked whether he's thought about setting up a poker league with some of the other drivers, Kamui reveals that the game is already more popular in the paddock than many would realise. "Why not? It would be fun to get the guys together. Many of the Formula 1 drivers enjoy playing too. But if they got involved, perhaps it would be for big money."

One thing is for sure – every time Kamui has had his DAMS car on pole for the Sunday sprint race he has brought it home in first place. Three in a row so far. Maybe that four-of-a-kind is worth a bet!



GP2 SERIES RACE REPORT BARCELONA (Apr 26-27)



PARENTE'S PERFECT START

Former Renault World Series champion Alvaro Parente made a dream start to his GP2 Series career, securing a front-row grid slot before leading from lap one to win the Barcelona feature race on his championship debut.

The Portuguese driver snatched the lead after Piquet Sports' pole-sitter Pastor Maldonado stalled at the start. As a result, Parente had a free run down to the first corner, while Piquet Sport's Andreas Zuber came out of the turn-one mêlée ahead of iSport International's Bruno Senna. After an early appearance from the safety car, and during a frantic round of early pitstops, Senna took second place from Zuber, but – despite the Brazilian applying constant pressure to Parente – that's how the front three finished.

Feature race (39 laps)

1 Alvaro Parente	(Super Nova)
2 Bruno Senna	(iSport)
3 Andreas Zuber	(Piquet)
4 Giorgio Pantano	(Racing Eng.)
5 Romain Grosjean	(ART)
6 Vitaly Petrov	(Campos)
7 Sebastien Buemi	(Arden)
8 Kamui Kobayashi	(Dams)

Fastest lap Alvaro Parente
Pole position Pastor Maldonado

Sprint race (26 laps)

1 Kamui Kobayashi	(Dams)
2 Sebastien Buemi	(Arden)
3 Giorgio Pantano	(Racing Eng.)
4 Bruno Senna	(iSport)
5 Davide Valsecchi	(Durango)
6 Javier Villa	(Racing Eng.)
7 Alvaro Parente	(Super Nova)
8 Mike Conway	(Trident)

Fastest lap Romain Grosjean
Pole position Kamui Kobayashi



The first GP2 Series race of the season gets underway in front of a full house in Barcelona

Sunday's sprint race also ended in a maiden GP2 Series win for Dams driver Kamui Kobayashi after race leader Romain Grosjean was hit with a drive-through penalty on the penultimate lap of the event.

The ART Grand Prix driver had racked up a seven-second lead before a spin for Giacomo Ricci brought out the safety car. A mistake at the chicane as the safety car was about to come in left Grosjean open to attack, and when the Frenchman darted across the start/finish straight to defend a move from Kobayashi, the stewards deemed him too aggressive. Romain was pulled into the pits, promoting Kobayashi to his first GP2 Series win.

GP2 SERIES RACE REPORT TURKEY (May 10-11)



PANTANO TAKES SERIES LEAD

Racing Engineering's Giorgio Pantano and ART Grand Prix's Romain Grosjean came away from a dramatic weekend in Turkey with victories in the feature and sprint races and first and second places in the championship standings.

Pantano quickly built up a dominant 7.8-second lead in Saturday's sprint race from Grosjean, but a late safety car period left the Italian, Grosjean and Piquet Sport's Andreas Zuber with a six lap sprint to the finish. A poor restart from Zuber and a great one from Pantano meant they remained that way to the chequered flag.

If the sprint race was a lesson in controlling the field from the front, Grosjean's victory in the feature race was an example of how to work for a win. Starting from seventh, the GP2 Asia champion avoided pile-ups at turns one and three before taking the lead from Vitaly Petrov on lap eleven.

Grosjean held firm to the end of a race that was also memorable for the unlikely exit of Bruno Senna who had to retire after hitting a stray dog.

Feature race (34 laps)

1 Giorgio Pantano	(Racing Eng.)
2 Romain Grosjean	(ART)
3 Andreas Zuber	(Piquet)
4 Karun Chandhok	(iSport)
5 Vitaly Petrov	(Barwa)
6 Sébastien Buemi	(Arden)
7 Javier Villa	(Racing Eng.)
8 Adam Carroll	(Fisichella)

Fastest lap Andreas Zuber
Pole position Giorgio Pantano

Sprint race (23 laps)

1 Romain Grosjean	(ART)
2 Vitaly Petrov	(Barwa)
3 Sébastien Buemi	(Arden)
4 Giorgio Pantano	(Racing Eng.)
5 Mike Conway	(Trident)
6 Ben Hanley	(Barwa)
7 Alberto Valerio	(Durango)
8 Alvaro Parente	(Super Nova)

Fastest lap Romain Grosjean
Pole position Adam Carroll



ART Grand Prix driver Romain Grosjean celebrates the sprint race win that took him to second place in the drivers' championship

Drivers' points

1 Giorgio Pantano	24
2 Romain Grosjean	19
3 Sébastien Buemi	14
4 Andreas Zuber	13
5 Vitaly Petrov	12
6 Bruno Senna	11
7 Alvaro Parente	11
8 Kamui Kobayashi	8

Teams' points

1 Racing Engineering	27
2 ART Grand Prix	19
3 Arden International	16
4 iSport International	16
5 Piquet Sports	15
6 Barwa Int. Campos	13
7 Super Nova Racing	11
8 Dams	8

TEACH IT TO BEHAVE.



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